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ABSTRACT

The process of aesthetic education is not limited to the fine arts. Parallels may be identified in the language arts and particularly in the art of creative reading. As in a musical experience, a creative reader will apprehend the content of the literature and couple personal feelings with the events of the reading experience. Parallel brain processes between music and reading have also been identified in research. Musical experiences are functional in nurturing such abilities as listening skills, sequential thinking, and recognizing spatial and perceptual relationships, plus linear thinking, which are all germaine to the reading task. The relationship between music and reading can be analyzed in a parallel manner. Music has timbre and tonal nuances, while literature has vocabulary, usage, and innuendo of the language. In music there is rhythm, and in literature there is style, including flow, pace, and transitions. Both the listener and the reader bring past experiences to the musical and reading event, and both experience a play of imagery as the music or story unfolds. Furthermore, both listening and reading entail a pleasurable mood and involve the intellectual activity of following the unfolding musical structure or literary plot, themes, and characters. Once these parallels are better understood, they may be effectively used within instructional programs to collaborate in bringing about a truly integrated education. (HTH)

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Arts Integration

Parallels Between Music and Reading:

Process, Product and Affective Response

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Music, like literature, gives shape or form to ideas and feelings within us. The function of art has been described as an organizational process. That is to say that the arts deal with our very consciousness, continually sorting, shaping and clarifying states of feeling that come into being. Through such arts as dance, music or sculpture this process involves the transformation of sensory impressions (kinesthetic, aural, tactile and visual) into images. This process is called an aesthetic experience.

The process of aesthetic education, however, is not limited to the fine arts. Parallels may be identified in the language arts and particularly in the art of creative reading. As in a musical experience, a creative reader (or listener) will apprehend the content of the literature and couple personal feelings with the events of the reading experience. The involvement in the experience is strengthened by sensory awareness. As the plot (or theme) develops, the reader perceives content more meaningfully and formulates imaginal expectations for the coming events intuitively. In musical expereinces these phases of the process are parallel and readily identifiable.

There are further parallels to be recognized between the reading and music learning process. Parallel brain processes have been identified. Ample research suggests that the left brain processes of sequential and linear thinking are concomitant in the acquisition of verbal reading and music reading skills. Correlations exist between music

reading achievement and verbal reading achievement. Right brain processes such as recognizing spatial and perceptual relationships, are also involved in both verbal and music reading tasks. Auditory processing skills of a sequential nature, ie.e. the the essence of perceptive music listening, are viewed as critically important in the development of reading competence. Therefore, it comes as little surprise that musical experiences are functional in nurturing such abilities as listening skills, sequential thinking, recognizing spatial and perceptual relationships plus linear thinking which are all germaine to the reading task.

Other language arts skills as reading comprehension, vocabulary development, oral reading and creative writing correlate with musical skills. In fact, music is often employed as a vehicle to assist in the acquisition, retention and transfer of these language arts skills. Reading comprehension, to illustrate, is dependent upon thinking skills of both brain hemispheres. The task of comprehension involves logical, analytical and verbal thinking of the left hemisphere but draws upon holistic, simultaneous and synthesizing processes which are believed to be right brain ways of knowing. Through musical experiences the integration of these processes may be developed and refined; reading experiences may continue to strengthen the integration of hemispheric thinking skills. Evidence exists to support such a contention.

Sir Henry Hadow described music's innermost significance in "its own interplay of contrast and reconciliation, of unity in variety, of melodies which answer one psychological need, and of structural completeness which satisfies another." Can't the same be said of creative reading? In place of melodies, there may be characters and events which

satisfy and clarify feelings and ideas harbored inside each of us. The second major parallel between music and reading may then be defined as two sensory means which lead to a similar end product or result.

The enjoyment parallels between reading and music are oftentimes obvious when one witnesses that children invariably select reading or musical activities during free time. But perhaps the reasons for the enjoyment of these activities have not been analyzed in a parallel manner. Max Schoen outlined the nature of musical enjoyment as dependent upon the following conditions:

a. the timbre and tonal nuances of instruments;

b. the rhythm;

c. the listener's past experience;

d. the listener's play of imagery as the music unfolds, anticipating and projecting resolutions;

e. the pleasurable mood; and

f. the intellectual activity of following the unfolding of the musical structure.

What is the nature of reading enjoyment? Permit me to make the parallels below:

a. the vocabulary, usage and innuendo of the language;

b. the style, including the flow, pace and transitions within the literature;

c. the reader's past experience;

d. the reader's play of imagery as the story unfolds, anticipating and projecting events;

e. the pleasurable mood; and

f. the intellectual activity of following the unfolding of the plot, themes and characters.

The affective parallels of this nature are potentially powerful in response. The perceptions, feelings and attitudes of the listener or reader are manipulated and educated through the beauty of the musical or reading experience. Perhaps this is one reason why quality reading and musical activities are so coveted by children.

The area of choral reading demonstrates a number of overt parallels between music and reading. Such musical elements as melodic direction (inflection), tempo, texture and dynamics lend themselves quite easily to the reading of literature. However, the more subtle parallels between music and reading convincingly illustrate the existence of similar undergirding processes, products and affective responses between the two experiences. Once these parallels are better understood, they may be effectively utilized within instructional programs to collaborate in bringing about a truly integrated education.

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